THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. December 15, 1944 Kislev 29, 5705 No. 16.

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REALITIES AND VALUES

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

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WITH ALL DUE MODESTY

From a Jewish Chaplain:

Among the more serious Jewish men of this camp THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is paramount in importance for discussion matter and content. . . . THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST stands high in their estimation. . . .

From a Rabbi:

. . . My heartiest commendation and appreciation of your splendid magazine which I have read consistently through all my years of training at the Hebrew Union College.

From a soldier:

This past *Shabbat* I came across and borrowed the latest issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST in the Post Chapel and lost little time plunging into it with zest.

From a member of a leading Zionist youth organization:

Thank you for the spiritual food which *The Reconstructionist* always affords me.

TO OUR READERS AND THEIR FRIENDS:

THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL URGENTLY REQUESTS

that civilians refrain from visiting certain winter resorts which have been set up by the War Department as rehabilitation and rest centers for servicemen returning from overseas.

These centers are: Miami Beach, Florida; Hot Springs, Arkansas; Lake Placid, New York; Atlantic City, New Jersey; Asheville, North Carolina; Santa Monica, California.

This is little enough to ask.

WE URGE YOU TO COOPERATE WITH THE COUNCIL BY STAYING AWAY FROM THESE CENTERS THIS WINTER.

THE
Reconstructionist

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EDITORIALS

THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

IN Atlantic City, representative Jews from many countries came together, in the name of the survivors, to lament their losses and to count their remaining strength. Under the auspices of the World Jewish Congress they came, and for four days they surveyed the ruins and tried to give one another the strength to go on fighting for Jewish survival, for decent treatment, for restitution, for some plan by which to prevent a recurrence of the tragedy which befell Israel.

The practical accomplishment of the Congress meeting was the formulation of a proposal calling for the establishment of one, single worldwide body, devoted to Jewish relief and rehabilitation. One of the provisions includes the merger of the efforts now being exerted by the Joint Distribution Committe, the Jewish Agency and the World Jewish Congress, and the setting of a quota of ten million dollars for implementing the scheme. How the J.D.C. will take to the proposal remains to be seen. At the moment, it is difficult to see how the J.D.C. will be persuaded to exchange the United Palestine Appeal for the Jewish Agency (and the Congress) as a partner. The non-political character of the U.P.A. has made possible a fruitful collaboration with the J.D.C.; the Jewish Agency, on the other hand, represents a political program, which is acceptable to us, but may be far from acceptable to the J.D.C. leaders, in spite of their recent good work in cooperating with Zionists. And just how kindly the American Jewish public will take to Dr. Wise's offer to raise four million dollars in the United States is also subject to grave doubts.

What was perhaps most interesting about the Congress sessions was not the practical program, but the picture of Jewish inner life that emerged. Here were Jews from many lands, with little more than suffering to unite them. The meeting revealed to what extent Jews have become estranged from one another, how fragmentized the body of Israel has become. They spoke many languages, literally and figuratively. In the Zionist Congresses, there would always be "Congress-Deutch" to fall back upon, a sort of elegant Yiddish. This time the delegates needed to have the speeches translated for them. The Jews from Latin America

could not understand the Jews from Algiers; the English speaking Jews knew no Spanish; and hardly anyone knew Hebrew. Besides, the various groups had drifted temperamentally away from one another. As one reporter put it, the Eastern Jews came to pour out their hearts before the rest of the Jewish world, to expose their tortured souls to the sight of fellow-Jews and the world; the Western Jews spoke broadly of rights and justice; the South American Jews complained about the lack of provision for religious and cultural activity. On one thing, however, they shared a common emotion, their sense of dependence upon American Jewry for aid, physically, spiritually, politically.

No longer does an active, common faith unite world Jewry; the universal vocabulary of Torah and religion has fallen into desuetude. How badly, therefore, does Jewry as a whole need reconstruction! A decade hence even the present residue of a common Jewish consciousness among the Jewries of the different countries is bound to vanish, unless something is done immediately to restore a common purpose, to cultivate a common civilization, with Palestine as the center.

The main hope that such a reconstruction can be achieved lies in the unanimity of opinion at the Congress meeting with regard to the future of Palestine. Palestine is the last hope, not only for the homeless Jews, but for exiled Judaism. It is the one great unifying force, the one powerful, creative enterprise capable of infusing new life into the scattered hosts of the Jewish people. Without Palestine there can be no modern Jewish civilization; without a Jewish civilization there can be no common religion, and only the most tenuous bonds of mutal responsibility. This seems to be the major lesson to be learned from the sessions of the World Jewish Congress.

MACCABEES OF WORLD WAR II

THE titanic struggle in which the whole world is now inextricably involved is not the first. The struggle against tyranny, against darkness and barbarism, against all evil is not new. The battle for justice, for righteousness, for human dignity and the sacredness of the individual must be fought over and over again. The fight for right over might, for ethical principles over the lusts of the jungle is not new. We Jews know. Our people is the only living witness of the earlier phases of that struggle, which now runs into the thousands of years. We have shared and suffered in all of its later phases as well.

This week we celebrate Hanukkah. In honoring the memories of the Maccabees of earlier generations, we should also honor and glorify the memories of the men and women of our own times who have given their lives to preserve the light and to keep mankind free—the Maccabees of World War II. This week we honor those who gave their lives, and who are now expending them on every battlefield of the globe: the Cohens, the Levines, the Ginsbergs, the Levys, the Weinsteins, the Horowitz', the Kaplans,—together with those other Jews whose names conceal rather than reveal their Jewish identity, the Doughertys, the Collinses, the Flannagans, the Smiths and the Joneses! They all answer the roll call. But this time, as in World War I, we are not fighting alone. Protestants, Catholics, those without religious affiliations and those of *all* ethnic identifications are joined as one. So much progress, at least, we have made.

It is needless here to go into a lengthy enumeration of the outstanding Jewish men and women whose names shall go down in our history and that of all mankind as among the "firsts" on this or that front of battle. Wherever Americans have

landed, Jews have been there. Wherever Americans have died, the Star of David is mingled with the other markers for our departed.

If ever we celebrated Hanukkah, this year above all others must indeed be a year of wholehearted dedication and of vigorous reaffirmation of those ideals of freedom, righteousness and human sanctity for which Judaism has fought throughout the ages.

It is, therefore, quite appropriate that over five hundred local Jewish war records committees have been urged by the Bureau of War Records of the National Jewish Welfare Board to prepare fitting exercises, and, at Hanukkah memorial services, to pay tribute and offer thankfulness to those who have given their lives to keep mankind unchained. It is fitting, too, that during this period Frances Slanger, the first nurse to be killed in Germany, significantly one of our own faith, is to be honored at a special memorial meeting in Boston.

The Committee of the Army and Navy Religious Activities of the National Jewish Welfare Board has acted in the spirit of Hanukkah in requesting that Jewish congregations throughout the country set apart the Sabbath of the festival, Friday evening and Saturday, December 15 and 16, 1944, to be dedicated to the role of the Jewish Chaplain in the War. His contribution and his achievements in this struggle will be among the greatest epics of our people for generations to come.

A reasonable estimate places the number of American Jewish men and women who have died on the battlefield somewhere around 4,000. The total Jewish casualties actually may now be running at about 20,000. There are very few among us who have no near relative in uniform. There are still fewer who cannot count among the Jewish families that they know, some dear one who has been reported missing, wounded or captured, or who has died in the service of his country. At no previous time in the history of the Jewish people have we contributed a half million men and women for military service in the armed forces of one country alone,—and counting all who are in the uniforms of the United Nations,—close to a million, or the equivalent of 700 armed divisions, not at all an insignificant force of warriors.

May such facts as these keep our heads high, keep us ready to throw back into the teeth of our defamers, the malicious lies and the poisonous whispers with which they have infected mankind throughout the centuries. As we celebrate this holiday of Hanukkah, let it be accompanied by the sobering thought of what this all means in our day, — and that forever and forever there shall be engraved upon our minds and enshrined within our hearts, the deeds and memories of the Maccabees of World War II.

HILLUL HASHEM

IT is disconcerting and depressing to read, among the names of 37 meat processing concerns which the OPA is suing for black market operations, more than ten of the leading producers and distributors of Kosher meat products. Whether they are guilty or not will be decided by the courts, but the suit itself would hardly have been instituted without at least *prima facie* evidence of a breach of the law.

Apologists will, no doubt, at once claim that Jews are no more guilty of this offense than non-Jews. That may be true; but what does that help? A *hillul hashem* has been committed. Judaism has been disgraced by Jews, who should have felt morally bound to reflect honor upon it. The whole purpose of *kashruth*, which is

to invest even the choice and preparation of food with sanctifying religious associations, is defeated when *kashrut* is associated with the violation of a just law. No apologetics, valid or otherwise, can alter that fact.

The incident is not only shameful in itself; it is part of a disgraceful situation of much wider scope—the impotence of Jewish religious institutions to raise the ethical behavior of Jews to the level demanded by traditional Jewish standards of integrity and decency. To what is that impotence due? It is clearly a consequence of the chaotic state of Jewish communal organization, which prevents Jewry from applying any social sanctions to enforce its standards of conduct.

In the old Jewish communities of the ghetto, excommunication, or the threat of it, was as effective a method of social control as the exercise of the police power of the state. But there can be no excommunication from a non-existent or merely potentially existent community. Individual Jews can jeopardize the honor, the welfare and the security of Jewry as a whole, yet the Jewish community cannot extrude them from its midst nor penalize them for their un-Jewish behavior, because it has no formal organization. To be sure, a voluntarist Jewish community organization could not control the behavior of persons unwilling to submit to its authority. But it could read them out of the community of loyal Jews and thus clear itself of responsibility for their malefactions. It could, moreover, where such drastic action might not be called for, deny to wrong-doers, temporarily or permanently some of the benefits and prerogatives open to members in good standing.

The Reconstructionist Platform records as one of its essential planks, the creation of "a definite social structure" for Jewish life everywhere. It advocates to that end the establishment of Jewish Community Councils "on a voluntary, democratic basis . . . to include all Jews who wish to participate in the organized life of the Jewish people." It conceives as one of the principle functions of an organized Jewish community "to provide for the maintenance of the high ethical standards characteristic of Jewish tradition and for the application of those standards to changing social conditions."

Until such an organization of Jewish community life is effected, we will be held responsible for the misconduct of every Jewish wrongdoer without being able effectively to repudiate such misconduct as un-Jewish. And we will be shirking our religious obligation as Jews to do all in our power to make Jewish collective life an influence for righteousness.

OUTLAWING DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

THE first major effort by a state to outlaw discrimination in private employment is being made in New York through the State Commission Against Discrimination, headed by Irving M. Ives. The Commission has prepared tentative proposals, which have been the subject of hearings at Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and New York City. As a result of the hearings, proposals in the form of legislative bills will be offered the New York Legislature on or before February 1. Public sentiment seems to be strongly in favor of the measure under consideration, and interested persons in other parts of the country should make every effort to introduce similar measures and strive for their adoption.

The proposals of the Ives Commission contemplate a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee for the State of New York, based on a law provided with effective sanctions. The bills would

provide for a State Commission Against Discrimination, consisting of five commissioners, appointed by the Governor for staggered terms of five years, each commissioner to receive an annual salary of $10,000 and required to devote his full time to his duties as commissioner. The Commission would have the power to create advisory agencies and conciliation councils.

Under the proposed law it would be unlawful for an employer, because of race, color, creed or national origin, to refuse to hire or to discharge from employment any individual, or to discriminate against him in compensation or terms of employment. A labor organization will be prohibited from excluding from membership or otherwise discriminating against an individual because of his race, creed, color or national origin. An employment agency will not be permitted to print any publication or use any form of application which expresses any discrimination against an indvidual by reason of his race, religion, creed or national origin. It will also be against the law to aid or incite the doing of any act forbidden by the statutes.

The law will not affect, however, social clubs, fraternal, charitable, educational or religious associations not organized for private profit, nor will it affect farmers who employ not more than three persons.

An aggrieved person will file a complaint with the State Commission, and thereafter it will be the duty of one of the commissioners to make every effort to eliminate the unlawful practice, through conference, conciliation or persuasion. If these attempts fail, he will issue a notice to attend a formal hearing. If the respondent is found guilty, a "cease and desist" order will be issued. The complainant or respondent will have a right to go to the State Supreme Court for judicial review of any order made by the Commission. If the respondent fails to comply with the order made against him by the Commission, the Commission may obtain from the Supreme Court an order of enforcement. The Commission will be represented in the court by the Attorney General.

On a previous occasion we discussed the need for making the federal F.E.P.C. permanent. At the same time, we called attention to the further need of supplementing it by instituting similar state committees through state legislation. The jurisdiction of a federal F.E.P.C. "would of necessity be circumscribed by constitutional limitations on federal authority. It would apply only to cases arising under the powers of the United States government to regulate inter-state commerce. Although judicial interpretation has given a wide scope to these powers, there is still need for supplementary legislation by the states to make economic discrimination on the basis of race or religion universally prohibited." (*The Reconstructionist,* February 18, 1944).

Citizens of the State of New York should, therefore, indicate their support of the proposal for a state F.E.P.C. by writing to the Commission at 36 West 44th Street, New York 18; and citizens of other states should use the proposal as a model serving as the basis of initiation of efforts to outlaw, in their own states, discrimination in employment by reason of race, color, creed or national origin.

REALITIES AND VALUES

In a study issued by the American Council on Public Affairs, Dr. Carl J. Friedrich, Professor of Government at Harvard University and Director of Harvard's School for Overseas Administration, urges drastic revision of American policy toward Palestine. According to him America should demand: (1) re-

moval of restrictions on the movement of people into and out of Palesetine, (2) removal of restrictions on land-purchase, settlement and reclamation, (3) removal of trade barriers on imports and exports, (4) rapid and large-scale economic development, including reclamation and irrigation works, and industrialization, to increase the absorptive capacity, (5) removal of political obstacles to the development of a Jewish majority and (6) American participation in such international authorities as may be required to insure the unimpeded implementation of natural economic trends.

The above policy is notable for its grasp of the following fundamental facts: (1) that the interests of America and of humanity demand the economic development of Palestine's natural resources, (2) that that development is dependent on free access of Jews to Palestine and the removal of obstacles to their becoming the majority, and (3) that the United States must share in any international authority over Palestine, lest this policy be frustrated by imperialistic interests in Great Britain and elsewhere.

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In a recent issue of The Reconstructionist (Volume 10, number 12) we called attention to preparations being made by some of the churches for helping to adjust the returning serviceman to civilian life, and we urged similar preparations by Jewish religious bodies. We do not know whether it is from seed which we sowed that the idea has taken root and sprouted, but we are glad to note, in any case, that the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations has adopted a comprehensive program for the returning service men. It recommends to its congregations (1) that, for two years after the war, they offer to the men returned from military and naval service, free congregational membership with complete use of all synagogue facilities, including seats for the High Holidays, (2) free religious services for Bar Mitzvah, marriage and similar occasions, and guidance in the solution of family problems, (3) economic aid through placement and employment assistance, (4) help to wives and children through planned activities of the Sisterhoods and (5) vocational and family aid to servicemen on a non-sectarian, neighborhood basis. We do not know where the congregations will find the resources to carry out so ambitious a program, but we wish them success beyond our expectations.

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This is Jewish Book Month. Those of us who have responded to it must have enjoyed some long-deferred delightful hours of vicarious fellowship with distinguished authors. That should put us in the right frame of mind to listen to two urgent pleas that have come to us from Jewish Chaplains abroad. Chaplain Jacob Hochman pleads from Rome for aid in restoring the looted synagogue library of that city, which, before it was pillaged by the Nazis had contained some 10,000 rare volumes. Similarly, a letter addressed to the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation by Robert S. Marcus, chaplain of the Ninth Tactical Air Command, appeals for literature from America. "In my contact with Jewish communities in the liberated portions of Europe," he writes, "I have heard the beseeching call for news from America. These people, who have been living in terror and isolation, want periodicals, books of Jewish interest in all languages; they want to reestablish their cultural and religious ties with their American brethren. They want to build their libraries again, libraries destroyed by the Nazi psychopaths." We have sent as much of our own Reconstructionist literature as we had immediately available. We feel that our readers will also want to do their

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For Jewish Cooperative Settlement in America

By A. ELIHU MICHELSON

FOR a long while, I have been possessed by an idea —not an idea for a magazine article or for a brochure, but by an idea for living. Were I not afraid of sounding melodramatic, I would say that I have been moved as Saul was moved on a certain road to Damascus or, perhaps more appropriately, as Herzl was possessed by his idea after the Dreyfus trial. My idea is fundamentally an answer to my personal need for salvation but, as anyone with an ethical philosophy of life might have foretold, it requires for fruition a community—at least it presupposes a communal pattern of living. Like all ideas which contain an element of newness, it is initially a proposal difficult to accept. I, for one, however, am convinced that far from being impracticable, my plan is both possible and desirable—the projection of a valid ideal. Perhaps it is the only plan that can save American Jewry from the fate that befell the Jews of Alexandria—helotage.

Approaches to a New Pattern of Jewish Cooperative Living

In essence, my proposal is simple enough — I would like to see at least one experimental Jewish cooperative settlement established in America immediately after the war. Eventually, I would like to have a series of such cooperatives.

In response to experienced needs, different agencies within the American Jewish community have for some time flirted with this concept without ever taking the leap of faith which would actually have resulted in the establishment of the type of settlement here proposed. Jewish summer camps for children, varying in the intensity of their programs from Hebrew-speaking institutions to establishments that boast of an American-Jewish cuisine, are by now familiar phenomena in contemporary Jewish life. Variations of this development are to be found in the Brandeis Zionist Institute (intended for young men and women) and in the recent Jewish Laymen's Institute of the Seminary (designed to attract congregational leaders). In a somewhat different category because they are non-seasonal, long term projects, we can place the Labor Zionist *Haksharah* camps and even the National Farm School. Whether intended for juveniles, adolescents or adults; whether they are short or long term projects, whether they are purely secular, leftist, Zionist, or religious efforts — all existing institutes, camps and organizations of this type are avowedly means to an end. The *hiddush,* the new element, in the present proposal is the idea that the settlement be regarded as an end in itself—a way of living which can be productive of the highest type of Jewish self-fulfillment. It is to be considered as a cure—perhaps the cure—to the diseases which are devitalizing Jewish life in America, at the very time when the fate of Israel demands a healthy and flourishing Jewish community in the New World.

Three Contemporary Jewish Ailments

The ills that sap the energy and faith of American Jewry have been described in detail, repeatedly. It is hardly necessary to analyze them anew. Contributions in this field are helpful only insofar as they bring up to date the clinical chart of deterioriation. Fundamentally, American Jewry suffers from three chronic diseases: (1) Ever increasing numbers of

our people live godless lives; (2) American Israel is subject to discrimination and the threat of persecution; (3) The Torah as a guide for living is rapidly falling into disuse in this country.

It is obvious that these ailments have not run their full course. Heaven forbid, they ever shall! It is not my intention to picture American Jewry as an atheistic or even a secularist group, bitterly oppressed by anti-Semites, and utterly devoid of traditional Jewish ideals and observances. I am speaking not of absolutes but rather of tendencies, sufficiently strong and persistent to alarm and sadden those of us who love Jewish life and are committed to its perpetuation in America.

Godlessness

War-time needs have served to indicate that the American rabbinate is undermanned. Whereas Christian denominations are served by one minister per thousand or less of population, the entire Jewish community in America, conservatively estimated at four million souls, is served by a thousand English-speaking rabbis—one rabbi per four thousand. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that formal religion touches the lives of Jews to about one-fourth the extent that non-Jews are affected — or, if we allow for the ministry of Yiddish-speaking rabbis, we could argue for a ratio of one-third.

The real issue, however, goes deeper. It is my contention, based on the experience of almost a decade in the rabbinate, that even those Jews who are most active in synagogual life are, in an ethical sense, largely unaffected by their affiliation with a religious institution.

In all probability, this accusation is equally true of other organized religious groups — if we are to judge by the ethical standards prevalent in America today. One need not be blind to the solid virtues of American democracy—love of freedom, sense of fair play, desire for independence, readiness to endure hardship, and the evolving understanding of the responsibilities of power—to recognize at the same time, in this nation a fundamental materialism, elements of reaction, imperialist ambitions, the seeds of native fascism, isolationism, and the growth of those very forces which, directly and indirectly, have led the world to the holocausts of global war.

For our purposes, it is sufficient to indicate that Jews, even synagogue-Jews, do not rise above the prevailing ethical standards of America. In politics, they are as confused as their non-Jewish fellow-citizens. In business, they are no worse but neither are they any better than their Gentile neighbors. Their ambitions are no more lofty. I have seen synagogue-Jews, successful Jews, at work and at play and I find their mode of life meaningless, a striving after vanity. They work hard to accumulate wealth because money represents the only yardstick of security they know. Having money, they become ostentatious — just as the *nouveaux riches* everywhere. Miami vacations, mink coats and diamonds, parties marked by conspicuous waste of food and free-flowing liquor, endless hours of Mah Jong, Gin Rummy, beauty-parlor visits — this is the stuff of which successful Jewish Middletown is made. This is the goal towards which the less prosperous elements of American Jewry are striving. It is this kind of living which prompts Dr. Simon Greenberg, in a D-Day mesmage, to caution the members of his congregation: "Let this not be the time for drinking at night clubs, for betting at horse races, and for elaborate entertainment of any kind." Unfortunately, the advice is needed. This picture of American Jewry is a composite one, and is admittedly sketchy, but the outline is

all too true. In it there is no room for God, not even on the horizon.

Perhaps the following story, taken from the syndicated column by Boris Smolar, *Between You and Me,* which appeared on June 16, 1944, can serve to illustrate the point:

"Prof. Mikhoels who visited this country as a member of the Jewish delegation from Russia, while in Chicago with Col. Itzik Feffer, the other member of the delegation, discovered that he had a rich uncle there. . . The uncle, a manufacturer of gloves, came to visit him and was very much impressed with his newly-discovered nephew. . . . 'What are you doing for a living in Russia,' he asked him. . . . 'I am an actor!' Mikhoels replied. . . . 'An actor!' the uncle sneered, 'that is no profession for a fellow like you. Why don't you remain here and I'll make you the vice-president of my firm!' . . . 'But uncle,' the embarrassed Milkhoels said, 'I could not think of remaining in America. My comrade Feffer and I are here on a mission, and I certainly would not leave him alone!' . . . 'I see your point,' the good-natured uncle smiled. 'Of course, it is not my habit to expand the pay-roll of my firm by putting on relatives, but for your sake I shall also give your friend Feffer a good job in my business.' "

The average American Jew can think of no higher purpose in life than holding down a good job or running a prosperous business. Not all the synagogues in the land could convince him of the value of any worthier ambition.

American Jewish organizations, religious as well as secular, are means for social intercourse and stages for the display of financial success or political shrewdness far more than they are institutions serving personal piety, cultural self-expression, or communal development. Philanthropy is still a powerful motive in the Jewish community and the comparative success of Jewish welfare drives is a tribute to the dormant vitality of American Jewry but, for all that, the total sums contributed represent mere crumbs from the currently well-laden tables of America's Jews.

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, in "The New Palestine," June, 1944, correctly says that "as quickly as circumstances will permit, the direction of our interests and the emphasis of our activities should be shifted from the eleemosynary to the educational, cultural and spiritual. Fortunately," he continues, "we have by now almost our full quota of orphanages, hospitals, homes for the aged and other necessary philanthropic institutions. Here Jewish generosity and intelligence have built well and adequately. But," he adds, "our religious, cultural and spiritual life has been languishing. Neither our older people nor our younger people are experiencing Judaism as a directive force."

In similar vein, M. Boraisha in an article called *The Search for Jewish Content* (Congress Weekly, June 23, 1944) speaks of "the transformation of Jews into self - satisfied, life - enjoying and luxury-craving men and women."

In contrast to the best products of ghetto Jewry, the typical American Jew of today stands as a man without a high ethical code, without a sense of destiny, without God. It may be that some of us are now reacting away from this barrenness, but the search for content is still not apparent in the whole net-work of Jewish organizations—secular or religious.

Against organized Jewish religious forces in America, as against all organized religions, the charge may legitimately be hurled that they have not appreciably affected the paganism of capitalist society. They have prevented neither imperialist exploitation of "backward"

countries nor domestic oppression of the dispossessed masses. They have not put a stop to economic depressions nor to the greater moral evil of war. If it be urged that religion cannot be held responsible for those who ignore it, the argument is still valid that there must be something fundamentally wrong with the technique—if not with the ideals—of a system of thinking which in 4000 years (or in 2000 years) has not changed the basic motives of its adherents.

About the larger issues of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Christian Church, we Jews need not trouble ourselves. As regards Judaism in America, it can be asserted truthfully, in the words of an old hackneyed expression, that it has become "a way of talking and not a way of life." None of us *live* Judaism any longer—not even we rabbis. We think in terms of economic advancement as much as do all other Jews. We preach against exploitation and live (God save us!) on the munificence of the exploiters. We hold forth against the evils of social climbing, and serve in congregations which resemble nothing in the world so much as exclusive social clubs. We glory in the compliments of our congregants who, in their heart of hearts, despise us as economic failures. How could it be otherwise? Their measuring rod for success (and it becomes ours, too) is financial accumulation — and of that we have little. The cancer of competition eats into us — so that we look down condescendingly on colleagues who earn less than we and we look enviously to those who earn more.

It is not a new word, a new *midrash*, a more eloquent sermon that will save the remnant of synagogue-Jews. They know all the old appeals: to save their heritage, to remain loyal to the mission of Israel's prophets. They know all about the virtues of the godly life and the spiritual rewards of justice, mercy and humility. They are abundantly familiar with the fact that a life of Torah is reputedly blessed. But, they will not permit these ideals to touch their lives. They do not want their children to be rabbis or teachers of Judaism. They are Zionists without the remotest intention of having their Zionism affect their personal life.

They do not need more sermons, or more elaborate academies of learning, or new schools and new publications. It is not even a new committee, council, conference, assembly or fellowship that they require. To quote M. Boraisha again: "No living body which carries a vacuum within itself can exist. And no body of Jews has ever suffered from such hollowness as does this greatest of Jewish communities. The superabundance of organizations, societies, fraternal orders, benevolent groups, etc., is in itself a result of the attempts of this body to fill in the internal hollowness."

Jew Hatred

Much of the unrooted, superficial nature of American Jewish life is attributable to the presence in our society of animosity to the Jew. People who live under the shadow of a sword are more likely than those who can live normal lives to develop the attitude of—"Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." It is hard for any group to cling to its own peculiar and unique spiritual values when the burden of its experience indicates that because of those higher aspirations (insofar as it has them at all) it has been marked for persecution. A generation is growing to maturity in American Jewry which can remember no time when Hitlerism was not a threat to Jewish security. Is it any wonder then that so many of our young men and women are determined at all costs to escape the burdens of their Jewishness? The experience of

German Jewry has not demonstrated to the present generation of Jews in America the futility of assimilation. On the contrary, the catastrophe which has befallen the Jews of Europe has accelerated the desire for euthanasia in the hearts of hosts of American Jews.

Even those who are made of sterner stuff and are determined to cling to their Jewishness are beguiled by the leaders who promise an easy defense against anti-Semitism. All too much of the energy which should have been poured into reconstructing the edifice of Jewish spiritual life, has been diverted into so-called defense agencies. These are and will be totally ineffective in withstanding the flood - tide of American reaction. A post-war economic crisis may well be the starting point for a new wave of anti-Semitism that will wash thousands of Jews out of their precarious positions in the American economy. Thinking Jews know this and fear it. In consequence, whole sectors of our lives as Jews are devoted to what is euphemistically called "public relations," i.e. the task of impressing upon the non-Jewish world the indubitable fact that Jews, just as all other good Americans, have contributed toward the creation of the American way of life and toward safeguarding it against Nazi and Japanese attack.

In itself there is nothing odious about such self-advertisement. It is simply another indication of the barrenness of so much Jewish communal effort in this country. Instead of pleading for good will and buying tolerance, is it not time that we considered constructing a miniature society in this country that would reflect the Jewish group at its best—a society to which we could point with pride? To me it seems likely that such a community might go a long way toward silencing some of those who resent the Jew. Even if this hope proved to be unfounded, Jews who lived in it could at least afford, in their personal lives, to ignore the social and economic pressure of anti-Semitism.

Torah-True Judaism In a Vacuum

American Jewish life has disintegrated most obviously and conspicuously in the realm of observance. Those of us who are attempting to maintain the traditional usages and rituals have come to feel that we live — the word is inevitable — in a vacuum. Where there were formerly hundreds of thousands, there are now only scores of observant Jews. The next time an English-speaking rabbi talks boastingly or smugly of his congregation, ask him how many of his members keep *kosher* homes, how many pray each day, and how many observe the Sabbath. Only at a rabbinic convention can the rabbi today feel that he is not an isolated medievalist clinging nostalgically to a dying discipline. Maurice Samuel in *The World of Shalom Aleichem* puts it well:

"But even those who have tried their hardest to conserve the old forms know that 'it is not as it used to be,' for whatever their own practices and inclinations, the ancient setting no longer exists. What kind of Sabbath is it, I ask you, which leaves the world around you utterly unchanged from the week-days? The shops are open, the market-place is filled, the horses neigh, buyers and sellers chaffer, the El or the surface car thunders past the synagogue, and the Sabbath siesta is a day-mare in a din of blaring radios and yelling children playing baseball in the street. And all the surviving Kasrielevkites, the traditionalists and the modernists alike, remember now and again with a nostalgic pang the far-off magic of those sacred hours, those transfigured interludes of the Sabbaths and festivals for which even progress and freedom have found no substitute."

Unless we can quickly supply a new setting to take the place of the old, even the most tough-minded among us will, in the very near future, awaken to find that we no longer have the inclination and the fortitude to attempt the recapturing of the beloved transfiguring magic.

Even those of us who are fortunate enough to share in the relatively Jewish vitality of a thickly populated Jewish neighborhood are no longer able to be complacent about the Jewish loyalties of our own children. The generation that knows why it is not customary to have freshly baked *bagel* on Saturday night; that remembers what a city street looked like thirty years ago when Jews rushed to *Shul* to hear *Kol Nidre*; that can recall the smell of corn-stalks over the *Sukkah* on a crisp October night, of freshly baked *Homantaschen,* of *Homez* burning at the curb on a rainy *Erev Pesah*; that can recollect the plaintive melody of *Shabbat Minhah,* the wail of *Kinnot* on *Tisha B'ab,* and the joyous tunes of *Hakafot*—is a generation that is rapidly disappearing.

There was a time when the chief impediment to perpetuating that kind of *Yiddishkeit* was the lack of an adequate ideological basis. How can one pray in the old forms, when one's conception of God has altered radically? How can one continue to observe *Shabbat* when the Biblical accounts of Genesis and Exodus are no longer regarded as true? In the light of ethnological data on dietary usage among primitive peoples, how can one continue to observe *kashrut*? Those of us who wanted to observe the *mitzvot,* however, found reasons for doing what we wanted, really wanted, to do. We interpreted and continued to *daven.* We discovered the ethical basis of Genesis and Exodus, the sociological implications of Sabbath observance, and we continued to chant *Kiddush* and *Habdalah,* to walk and not drive on *Shabbat,* to use an electric time-clock to switch the lights off on Friday night. Many of us learned to talk of "folkways" and of "survival value," or we insisted that what was dedicated to God had the same psychological force as what had been commanded by God—and we kept on using blue soap for *milchig* dishes and red soap for *fleishig.* In a word, we found reasons to do all the things we wanted to do. It is now possible to follow all the patterns traced by a nostalgic memory of Jewish life, and still, when pushed for an explanation, be as ultra-modern as an ordnance plant in an Army proving ground.

Today, however, there is no one who wants to live this kind of Jewish life—or almost no one. We cannot teach children that Jews do not work or ride on *Shabbat,* when all about them reality contradicts us. We cannot talk of *kashrut* as a Jewish religious usage where the majority of Jews no longer practice Jewish dietary usages. At least we cannot do these things with any hope of success or with any real moral justification. If valid education is a training for life, then how, in good conscience, can a Jewish parent play the ostrich? How can he continue to teach his child the holidays, the prayers, Yiddish, or Hebrew as though nothing had happened to the masses of American Jews in the last thirty years?

For myself, I decided long ago that I wanted to continue in traditional paths. Even if I do not recite all of the morning service, I want to put on *Talit* and *Tefilin* every morning. Though I permit myself uncooked food that is not "strictly" *kosher,* I want to refrain from eating non-kosher meat. If I do no longer subscribe to the "selling of *hometz,*" I still want to change dishes for Passover. I want to do these things (and dozens of others) and to familiarize my children with each of these rites. But to what end? Will it really be possible in the America in which they will mature to practice such customs? If they are indeed imbued

with a spirit of devotion and determined to maintain the tradition, will they not come to live isolated lives as members of a scattered esoteric sect? Will their opportunity for normal social contacts with those of similar background be reduced to the point where frustration becomes the price of loyalty? On the other hand, should they succumb to the pressure of their environment and slowly discard the major part of their heritage which, perhaps selfishly, I am bequeathing to them—will they not develop feelings of guilt, be subject to inner conflicts and ultimately—again—frustrated?

Many of us have too long worked on the assumption that Judaism is a personal matter. The contrary is, of course, true. Judaism is either the living civilization of a group or it is nothing. It is not possible to create a little Jerusalem within the four cubits of one's own home. It is not even possible for children to draw sustenance from a reservoir that is distant, either in time or in space. They need an immediate environment—such as is nowhere to be found in America today. If Judaism is to continue in America, we who are committed to revival must create the environment.

Needed—A Jewish Cooperative Settlement in America

To escape from the godlessness of contemporary Jewish life, from the constant pressure of a hostile non-Jewish culture, and from the factors which have caused most Jews to discard the traditional symbols and usages of our civilization, American Jews must seek refuge in Jewish cooperative settlements.

To cite M. Boraisha once again: "We are gradually coming to the realization that one cannot be a Jew merely by proclaiming himslf to be one. Nor is participation in Jewish political and social movements, writing in a Jewish language, carrying the burden of the Jewish tragedy sufficient. Jewishness must be introduced into daily life, into personal conduct; one must belong to a group living Jewishly." Many recognize this need. We talk glibly of a new spiritual orientation, of personal piety, of finer psychological techniques—and we fail to convince even ourselves.

The truth is that, as Dr. Max Arzt points out in an article called *Jewish Identity in the Modern World* (The Reconstructionist, June 23, 1944): "Despite all the theorizing about cultural pluralism, about the rights of minorities to continue and further develop their own way of life, the process of assimilation goes on with unabated acceleration." I venture to insist that the cure lies in Jewish separatism, in Jewish collective settlements.

A Godly Society

Perhaps some individuals may develop a personal religion and a true piety in the competitive social order of twentieth century America. For most men, piety and ethical living are dependent upon a social milieu that is less competitive, less dominated by the seeking after gain. It is no accident that, for modern Jews, the most inspiring efforts to achieve the good life are to be discovered in the collective colonies of Palestine—in the *moshav*, the *kibbutz* and the *kvutzah*. At this late date, the idea of cooperative living should not be unfamiliar to any liberal. Credit, purchasing, marketing and producing cooperatives, in great numbers, function in many parts of the world. The Scandinavian countries have carried cooperatives beyond the realm of the experimental. Nine million people, in Great Britain alone, are members of cooperative organizations. It is estimated that three of every five farmers in America belong to cooperative societies which together produce some three and a half billion dol-

lars worth of goods annually. Cooperatives, before the war, functioned not only on a national but even on an international scale.

There is a difference, of course, between cooperation for specific purposes and cooperative or collective living. But is it too much to expect of people who take religion seriously that they consider living according to a pattern which is an expression of the highest ethical standards that we know, particularly since it is also demonstrably practicable?

(*To be concluded in our next issue*)

Chaim Weizmann—Statesman and Prophet

By DAVID POLISH

THIS man, who was born near Pinsk, bears a mystical heritage. Endowed with one of the most lucid and penetrating minds of our generation, Weizmann comes by his science and his statescraft through a devious path, which winds back to the very heart of our people's agonies and hopes. This man, who learned to extract acetone from orange peels, was born and molded among an impoverished people, which extracted nourishment from potato skins and warmth from twigs and branches. He lived among a people which daily cheated death and hunger through constriction and concentration—a family to a room, a meal for a day. And if environment shapes our inclinations, perhaps this human chemistry of despair endowed Weizmann with that curiosity which enabled him to discover the means whereby a Palestinian family could prosper on a dunam of land where twenty dunams were once not enough. The wretchedness of Poland gave his chemistry a soul.

So, too, did the squalor of Poland's Jewry make him a master statesman, a statesman with the conscience of a prophet. Can a statesman come from Pinsk? We are told that diplomacy is a science, as precise as chemistry, and that it therefore requires the meticulous indoctrination which only the schools and training grounds can offer. But a school can also be a handicap, especially when a world is falling apart, for a school can be the reflection of a sick and inept society. It can be the academy in which are produced quacks dedicated to keeping a decrepit world patched up and punctured with hypodermics as long as possible.

Out of these schools came Neville Chamberlain, who sent Hitler into ecstacies with the statement, "What concern can we have for that far-away land, Czechoslovakia?" Out of these schools came Neville Henderson, who reported with great satisfaction that, when Goering saw him crawling through the underbrush during a deer hunt, Goering remarked, "That is the proper attitude for a diplomat to take—on his belly." Out of these schools came the well-groomed and immaculate undertakers of civilization. Such schools were unknown in Poland's Ghettos; so Weizmann was spared their atrophying handicap.

There was a different kind of school for Poland's Jewish youth. Its curriculum was the despair of a people, its entrapment, its degradation. Its objective was not to have and to hold world empire and helpless peoples, but to cast off and escape the suffocation of the *galut*. It was in the *bate midrash* of Poland that endless

generations of Jewish manhood exhausted their strength pining for the *geulah*. Scholar, mystic, saint, kabbalist, rationalist, *hasid, mitnagged* were a united brotherhood in the agonizing labors to hasten the end of days. There they learned the essence of statesmanship—redemption of a people from the mire of life's and the world's injustice. The nuances of diplomatic protocol they did not learn, for they knew well the distinction between what was essential and what was unessential. They spurned the jugglery of international intrigue as unworthy of a kingdom of priests.

Yet Chaim Weizmann, whose diplomatic roots spring out of anguish for his stricken people, has achieved renown as one of this day's most amazing political figures. Balfour said of him, "It is not necessary to introduce Dr. Weizmann to me. He is the man who converted me to Zionism in the middle of the East Manchester election." At the Peace Conference, Lloyd George observed that, of all the great assembled there, Weizmann and Venizelos were the two cleverest. Sir Ronald Storrs, hardly a Zionist enthusiast, said of him:

"An almost feminine charm combined with a feline deadliness of attack; utter disillusion over both Gentile and Jew, together with burning enthusiasm and prophetic vision of what negotiation may still win from the one for the other . . . a brilliant talker with an unrivalled gift for lucid exposition—did he not explain Einstein's Relativity to my sister and myself at luncheon until for a moment I dreamed that even I understood? — As a speaker almost frighteningly convincing, even in English . . . in Hebrew, and even more in Russian, overwhelming; with all that dynamic persuasiveness which Slavs usually devote to love and Jews to business, nourished, trained, and concentrated upon the accomplishment of Zion."

The Clash Between Pinsk and Downing Street

The clash between the statecraft of London and that emanating from Pinsk was slow in coming, ever smoldering, but portending to humanity a moral lesson of cosmic proportions. Almost, it seems, that Providence furnished this humble scientist with a pretext for coming to England in 1904. Transcending the scientific gifts he placed at her feet were the great ethical and human lessons he preached to her for decades before disaster came tumbling around her from the skies in 1939. He was lecturing England since 1918, on the higher chemistry, the chemistry of human relations. Compound international banditry with callous indifference to suffering, precipitate these into a seething continent, where the Jew's abjectness symbolizes humanity's acquiescence in depravity, and it must follow that there will be violent explosions that will shake the earth.

After the infamous Passfield White Paper of 1930, Weizmann resigned his office as President of the Jewish Agency, in order to campaign against the callousness of British statesmanship to the world. Long-suffering, infinitely patient, Weizmann illuminated the coming world tragedy, which was being hastened by the cynical diplomacy of the British Government. He called attention to a despairing statesmanship which hoped to keep a nation alive by fleeing from wolves while throwing helpless victims in their paths. Some day, the nation in flight must run out of victims and turn to face the wolves alone. One day, at last, Weizmann was to epitomize the chasm that yawned between Pinsk and the already discredited diplomacy of Downing Street. In 1939, weeks before the second World War, he appeared before Neville Chamberlain, whose government had promulgated the infamous White Paper. Chamberlain de-

fended himself, "I will guarantee Jewish minority rights." "Perhaps," said Weizmann, "but who will guarantee the guarantor?" Chamberlain retorted, "It is not politic to be so bitter. I am a friend of the Jews." Weizmann rebuked him. "You were also a friend of the Czechs."

How can this man, who fought back time and again, be charged with diffidence, softness, and with being intimidated before British power? Too often, in the last decade, one prostrate people after another has blamed its own leaders for a helplessness not of their own making. Great national leaders were victims of a polluted game of treachery, played upon the European chess board, between a pre-war England and a Nazi Germany, and the heads of little governments could do naught but move on to the last checkmate. Was Benes a vacillating man? Was Jan Masaryk a spineless puppet? Was the broken leader of pitiful Austria, Schuschnigg a weakling? Was Leon Blum a mere temporizing professor? Yes, was Franklin D. Roosevelt, caught in the meshes of a conspiracy to keep America damagingly neutral, inept and blundering? Weizmann, like these, personifies the tragedy of this age, the tragedy of wise men, who knew the way but were held prisoner by the machinations of super-power politicians who thwarted every effort for national liberation.

Weizmann the Prophet

It is stupid to blame Weizmann for conditions which were made in a world corroded by appeasement, and which could be unmade only on the battlefield. To those who believe only in the apparent, Weizmann's academic career made him a *Luftmensch.* His early devotion to Ahad Ha'am and his zeal for a Hebrew university at the laying of whose cornerstone he was present, relegated him to the company of dreamers and weavers of fantasy. But it was this academician who in his twenties openly opposed the titan of Zionism, Theodore Herzl. It was this cultural Zionist who forged a policy for Zion from which he has never let us retreat, "Palestine must be as Jewish as England is English." It was he who compelled MacDonald to retire from behind his wall of arrogance and intransigence and extend to his outraged critic the hand of conciliation. It was he who, right or wrong, stood up to that almost legendary symbol of American democracy, Louis D. Brandeis. It was he who created a Jewish Agency out of disparate and lethargic elements of Jewry. It was he who besieged the British government relentlessly, pleading and thundering for a Jewish army, and it was Weizmann who fearlessly had this to say to Chamberlain's Britain:

"If there is a MacDonald in England, there is also a Balfour in England. If England does not understand the importance of sixteen million Jews to world democracy, she shall soon understand it, and we shall do our utmost to further that understanding. I have been silent for twenty years. Now I shall start to speak and England will hear my voice from every corner of the world on the heaven-shaking injustice they would inflict upon the Jewish people. . . . There is no need to despair for our future. Not we but the British were the losers at London, because they had surprisingly placed administrative necessity before honor and justice."

And now, sardonically, comes the ultimate vindication of Weizmann's wisdom. The apostles of the pistol have broken out of the restraint which he helped forge for his people, and for their one defiant act, all of us together with the *Yishuv* must wait like a prisoner languishing before sentence is passed. Again, the time for testing has come for this man. At seventy, almost upon the threshhold of

fulfillment, he must summon up his strength and wisdom and courage to resume the battle. What will he say and what will be the issue of this new trial for Israel? If he has taught us anything, it is temperance compounded with fearlessness. We must not lose ourselves, but we must not hesitate to take up the truth in our own behalf.

In this hour of testing, Chaim Weizmann will not be found wanting. It is his genius to salvage, whether it be derelict waste products or the tottering fortunes of his people. Weizmann is the alchemist of our day, and he has discovered the philosopher's stone. The medieval alchemists, who sought to convert base metals into gold, have won the disrepute of history not because of their futile quest, but because of their failure. Weizmann will illumine the annals of Jewry not as scientist, not as statesman, but as heir of that fanatic band of alchemists who at last abstracted a land out of visions and a people from a nightmare. May he be spared to behold the fruition of the prophecy, twenty-five hundred years old, which he has labored to fulfill:

"For thus says the Lord, 'As I have brought upon this people all this great trouble, so will I bring upon them all the good that I promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land of which you say, 'It is a desolation, abandoned by man and beast, given into the hands of the Chaldeans.' Yes, men shall buy fields for money, and shall sign the deeds, seal them, and get witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah—in the cities of the hill country, the cities of the Shefelah, and the cities of the Negeb—for I will restore their fortune,' is the oracle of the Lord."

Music Notes

By JUDITH K. EISENSTEIN

THE doldrums of the Jewish musical world force one to search both deep and far for a glimmer of creativity. Fortunately we have, at last, a small accumulation of publications which are of sufficiently general interest to warrant notice.

Of the three volumes of songs which have appeared in recent months, two are arrangements of Palestinian songs for voice and piano. Since we have been crying, in these columns, for more piano accompaniments, we make haste to welcome both books, especially in view of the fact that they in no way duplicate each other.

First of these is a thin paper-bound booklet called "Ten Palestinian Songs," arranged by Julius Chajes especially for Hadassah groups, (published by the Transcontinental Music Corp., 113 West 57th Street, New York City). Mr. Chajes is a competent musician who has composed extensively and successfully. He has invested much care in arranging these ten songs with simplicity and character. He has selected lively tunes, most of which are possible accompaniments to the Hora. These songs are not chosen for their intrinsic merit, but obviously because they are considered easy to learn, especially by people who do not know Hebrew. Had musical quality been the basis of selection, some one or two songs of poetic and

emotional depth would undoubtedly have been included. We are willing to grant the justice of such a selection, but would then demand some consistency in the treatment of the songs. These accompaniments are simple, but not necessarily easy to play, nor do they make the songs easier to learn. For the average home or club pianist the little imitative figures in the inner parts, and the percussive figures constantly introduced "off the beat" only add to the difficulties of the already syncopated rhythms of the melodies. For spontaneous group singing, we need accompaniments which will buoy up the melodic line, and not distract from it, as these do. For dance accompaniments, the one indispensable factor is a good strong rhythmic beat. Mr. Chajes may rebel against the seeming banality of the "oom-pa" bass, but alas, that is what these songs require. We have yet to find someone who will provide "oom-pas" for our dances, as strong as a conga bass, with as distinctive a flavor.

The second publication is presented not as a song collection at all, but as a "Hebrew Cantata" called *Bone Tsiyon,* or *Builders of Zion,* by Heinrich Schalit, (published by the composer at 90 Camp Street, Providence, R. I., under the auspices of Temple Beth-El of that city). The scheme of the cantata is described in a foreword by William G. Braude as follows: "It opens with a call to come to the Land of Israel. The arrivals learn quickly that the land is desolate and that it requires much work to make it bloom again. The pioneers are desperately poor, but they find courage in a chorus of Halleluyahs augmented by the songs of children who busy themselves with young saplings. The spirit of Hebrew song steadies them for the gruelling labor of building roads under a desert sun. But, above all, the mystic vision of a messianic day, when men like Bar Yochai will once again walk in Eretz Israel, bids them persevere in their deliberately chosen lives of hardship."

In order to comply with the minimum requirements for a cantata, there would have to be some sung or spoken narrative link between the songs. What we have here is a fine song cycle, arranged either for unison chorus, or solo with two part chorus. It is ideal for school use. One could imagine a talented youngster writing the missing narrative sections, either in Hebrew or in English. One could readily visualize the suite in tableau or dance interpretation. We are concerned here with its possibilities for home and group enjoyment. For there is no reason why these may not be appreciated as an unusually interesting selection of beautiful songs. Schalit's arrangements are not too difficult for a moderately equipped pianist. To be sure, they do not always carry the melody line, but they never distract from it. And on the other hand they are so rich and expressive that they bring out the full meaning and emotional quality of each song. In these songs we find joy and strength, and religious fervour. There is rhythm, and plenty of it,—the rhythm of little children running to work, or of the heavy hammer beat, or of the ecstatic dance. Schalit gives us the heartbeat of Palestine in these nine songs.

In an entirely different category is the third publication we wish to comment on. The *Children's Suite* composed by Gershon Ephros to poems by Bialik, (Bloch Publishing Co., with the sponsorship of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of Perth Amboy) is a purely creative piece of work. Here we have a series of original compositions which are intended for the accomplished singer and pianist to perform, and for the rest of us to listen to. Grown-ups and children alike would delight in these utterly charming inter-

pretations of the little gems of Hebrew poetry, even without understanding every single word. Bialik created a glittering child's world with language, and Ephros paints it in vivid tone colors; the high trill of the bird, the strident call of the cock to the lazy boy, the mechanical turning of the merry-go-round, the warmth of family affection are all in the songs. Ephros combines a contemporaneous quality with a melodic line that is at once Palestinian and profoundly traditional. And, with all that, he preserves the child-like transparency of the poems. We wish that a happier format might have been provided to match the gay contents of this little book. However, we hope that singers will penetrate behind the drabness of the cover and the printed page and be tempted to include at least a few of the songs in their programs, so that we may all have the pleasure of hearing them before long.

WITH deep regret we note the untimely death of Jacob Beimel whose contribution to the development of Synagogue music in America has been a mighty one, and whose scholarship and devotion will be sorely missed. His influence has been felt in every effort in this country to raise the standard of our liturgical music and to maintain the finest elements of our musical tradition especially in congregational singing. The few numbers of the magazine "Jewish Music," which he edited and strove valiantly to establish, are still sought after as invaluable reference material. His dream of the establishment of a School of Synagogue Music, which might train cantors and musical directors of synagogues, has not been realized. We can only hope that the impetus which he gave to Jewish music at the cost of so much strength and sacrifice may not cease, but go on to create worthy memrials to his name.

Book Notes

A SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY OF JEWISH LIFE

DER GAYER, by Menachem Boraisha. A narrative poem, in two volumes. New York, 1943.

AN important literary work has appeared in Yiddish. It is a work that sums up an epoch, that presents the social and spiritual odyssey of Jewish life—of the Jew on a pilgrimage from *yesterday* to *tomorrow* through the anguish and the hope and the pathos of *today.* It is difficult to describe this work, to give it a precise and formal classification. Ostensibly it is a poem, a narrative poem, with sweet and wonderful lyrical interludes, with a wealth of rythmical variety, with many-tinted colors and many melodies and moods. But it is also an ethical-religious and philosophical work, as deeply concerned with the meaning of its tale as with its music; and it is history too—the history of the second half of the nineteenth cenutry—and history as seen *sub specie aeternitatis,* where the day and the age are set over against a way and a heritage.

Der Gayer is Noah Markon, and his life spans four decades—from about 1842, the beginning of the *Haskalah* in Russia, to the pogroms of 1881, which had an enormous effect on the soul and mind of the Russo-Jewish intellectual. Markon's pilgrimage is not only a going from place to place, it is also a rising in height from level to level. But it is always a going, a *process* in space and in time,

an expanding and deepening social and spiritual experience. It is a going and a climbing, and the road and the mountain are steep and full of stones. It is a running, and it is not characterized by *kefitzat haderekh* (a miraculous leaping over space) because redemption is not a flower to be plucked in the field, and salvation does not fall like fruit from a tree. Slowly and painfully we must grow towards, and prepare ourselves for, salvation and redemption.

And so Noah makes his pilgrimage from stratum to stratum in the community, from village to village in the land, from rung to rung on the ladder of spirit. In his own flesh and in his own soul—that is to say, in the hunger of his body and in the hunger of his children as well as in his quest for moral and intellectual integrity—he endures all the agony of all the people he learns to know on his journeys. He endures their agony because he is one in their midst; is one of them; there is no wall between him and them; there is no pretense and no condescension. And yet he is one *beyond* them, because he is essentially *ethical man,* because his life is a *going* and not a *standing* as is theirs when they do not question at all, because it is a *going* and not a *running* as is theirs when they are suddenly and cataclysmically stirred into action. He is one of them, and always he remains himself; because he is *conscience* straining to become *consciousness* and he is *consciousness* that must have its roots in *conscience.*

Noah Markon's life was a hard one and sometimes a bitter one. His mother died as he was born and his father left him. He groped through boyhood and married a simple and understanding woman, and she bore him children. He was poor and remained poor, not only because of his moral honesty, but also because of his intellectual honesty. There was light about him mingled with darkness and it was not always easy to see—and especially to make others see—where the light ended and the darkness began. And so he tried his hand at many things. He was a *melamed,* a peddler, a shopkeeper, a *mashgiach* in a slaughterhouse, a night-watchman, a worker in a forest. And everywhere new avenues of Jewish life opened up before him and new layers too. He divined holiness where he expected to discover obscenity, and he beheld obscenity where he thought he would find holiness. He kept on going and he walked through the full cross-section of Jewish life. He walked with open eyes and open heart, for it was a cross-section in space and a crisis in time, a point and a moment when moorings were loosened, when the hold of tradition was slipping, when the ship was adrift and there was no compass to point the course toward new landscapes and new horizons. He walked, stopping here and there, to linger for a while. And there were some—the mean, the myopic, the communal parasites, those who lived in the past as well as those who negated the present for the sake of the future—who put obstacles in his path, and spoke of him with scorn. There were others too—the clear-visioned, the good, the contented, not out of despair but in hope—who helped him and even wished to emulate him.

Noah Markon's pilgrimage was a going and a seeking in all directions and in all dimensions. Almost the whole of Israel's spiritual history is telescoped in Noah's searchings and wanderings, and many of the eternal problems, baffling and perplexing the conscience of man, are noted and projected. With great artistic skillfulness episodes are woven into the poem wherein the past becomes coterminous, so to speak, with the present, and we find Noah listening to Rabbi Akiba, Maimonides, Moses Mendelssohn, Robespierre, scholars, Hasidic rabbis, Maskilim, revolutionaries. We, too, listen to them and

we gain a fresh insight into the greatness and the tragedy and the promise of our own times: the greatness of our heritage, the tragedy of man stumbling toward salvation, the promise that, out of the heritage and out of the stumbling, an old-new wisdom will shine forth.

And the future too becomes a kind of function of the present with Noah. His quest for salvation is not that of the ascetic for whom redemption is a relationship between the individual and God in isolation from society. It is salvation through an indissoluble relationship with his people and with mankind. Therein lies his bond and his covenant with God. Consequently, the great liberating movements of our day are anticipated, and Noah comes face to face with the forerunners of Socialism and Zionism. Indeed, at the end of the poem, he leaves Russia —with a group of young men—for Palestine, but after he has overcome all hardships for them, *he* returns to his wife and children.

Noah is the central character and "the pillar of fire" of this magnificent narrative poem. There are scores of other characters in it; there are environments too—the Jewish, the Polish, the Russian; there is here the clash of social classes, currents and a viewpoint; there is learning here and lore and metaphysics. *Der Gayer* is the mature product of Menachem Boraisha's thinking and growth. It took him ten years to write it.

On a cursory reading of *Der Gayer,* it might seem that its philosophical-religious message is anti-Messianic, that its purpose is to teach us that one cannot *run* towards salvation but must *walk* toward it. And yet, as we absorb the full message of the poem, it becomes clear that it is not at all antipodal, let us say, to the message and the meaning of the greatest messianic work in Yiddish literature, Leivick's *Der Golem* and *Die Geulah Komedie.* In *Der Golem* there is a running toward salvation and, in consequence, the unity of means and ends is destroyed, and the difference between truth and falsehood is obliterated and finally the *golem* begins to destroy those he was invoked to save and preserve. In *Die Geulah Komedie* there is no longer redemption invoked by a miracle. There is a walking toward salvation, there is a quest for the beauty and the humility of holiness. At the beginning of the poem there is a chasm between Yosele, the people, and Mashiah ben David. The movement of the poem is a movement across the chasm and, in the last scenes, Yosele has taken on the aspect of Mashiah ben David and Mashiah has taken on the aspect of Yosele. The people and the redeemer are one. Salvation is from within and it embraces the world that is without. It is lodged within the heart, the mind, the conscience of man; and the world of man, society, is its frame-of-reference and the object upon which it brings to bear its vision and lavishes its love. In essence and in effect, Boraisha's *Der Gayer* and Leivick's *Die Geulah Komedie* are not antithetic, but are antiphonal, and represent Yiddish literature on its highest and most exalted plane—the striving for a synthesis of tradition and contemporary Jewish reality, of Jewish and universal aspirations, of the temporal and the enduring values in society. It is a striving which is already manifest in the stories of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, in Peretz's Hasidic and folk-tales, in Asch's *Der T'hilim Yid,* in some of the poems of Liessin, Einhorn and Yehoash, in Leivick's *Golem* and *Geulah Komedie* and in some of his lyrical poems. It is the striving—in the words of Moses Hess — toward the holiness of Israel's and man's "historical Sabbath." This is the *yihus* and this is the "golden chain" of Yiddish literature on its highest plane. Boraisha's *Der Gayer* shares this *yihus* and is a link in this golden chain.

ISRAEL KNOX

REALITIES AND VALUES

(Continued from Page 8)

share. Send books, pamphlets and magazines for this purpose to the National Jewish Welfare Board, Women's Division, 145 East 32nd Street, New York City.

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IN HIS COLUMN, "PURELY Commentary," in the Detroit Jewish News of November 24, 1944, Philip Slomovitz comments on the renewed interested in the preservation and collection of Jewish historical and ceremonial objects. He cites as evidence of that interest not only the Museum of the Jewish Theological Seminary and acquisition by the Hebrew Union College of Jewish religious art objects, but also private collections by individual Jews. The conclusion to which he comes is that "American Jews are concerned that the most important elements in Jewish life should be preserved."

We, too, think this renewed interest in articles of Jewish religious craftsmanship a good sign. We should understand, however, that "the most important elements in Jewish life" cannot be preserved in museums or curio cabinets. A living art, religious or secular, may, indeed, be stimulated by the products of an artistic tradition, but it is also possible for those products to remain mere antiquarian relics of a dead civilization. Before we can share Mr. Slomovitz's optimism, we should have to see some Jews who have the means commissioning Jewish artists to create new Jewish ceremonial objects with original motifs, or offering prizes for the best design submitted, or making provision, through the synagogues, Jewish centers and other institutions, for the sale, distribution and use of artistically wrought Jewish ceremonial objects.

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SUCH EXPRESSION AS "GOOD sportsmanship" and "fair play" are evidence of a widespread assumption that sports and athletics, as we know them, afford good moral training. It is therefore disconcerting to note the findings of a "clinic" on group relations sponsored by the Essex County Council of Churches in Newark, N. J. Educators and recreation directors, including representatives of the Christian and Jewish "Y"s and religious leaders, White and Negro, found that "competitive games between groups divided along racial and religious lines are a threat to interracial and interfaith relations." The findings of the clinic are perhaps significant beyond the value of the practical advice against athletic contests between different racial and religious groups. They seem to point to a conclusion that the shallow team spirit of much of our competitive athletics is of a piece with, and tends to augment, the shallow national, denominational and racial chauvinisms that impede the establishment of peace.

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HERE ARE SOME FIGURES ON the high cost, not of living, but of dying. Department of Commerce figures for 1942, quoted in a report of the Department of Research and Education of the Federal Council of Churches, show that the total cost of funerals, cemeteries, tombstones and similar items amounted to $560,900,000 or $405 per death. In a section of the report that discusses "attempts at funeral reform," cooperative burial associations are mentioned as contributing to the solution of the problem. One authority claims these cooperatives reduced the average cost of their funerals in 1939 to $165, with some as low as $84. They also eliminated other abuses arising from the commercialization of funerals. Is it not high time that the Synagogue, likewise, take steps to discourage the barbaric ostentation of modern funerals and monuments, to restore burial rites to their traditional simplicity, to protect the bereaved from extortion and to prevent the usurpation by funeral directors of functions that belong properly to the Synagogue itself?